



September 29, 2008 06:18am AEST

Round two of schools PC fund opens

Julian Drape in Canberra | July 14, 2008

ALMOST 2000 secondary schools across the country can now apply for funding under the second round of the Rudd government's computers in schools program, but it's possible some of them won't.

Some public schools in South Australia are worried they will be left to pick up additional operating costs after the computers have been purchased.

Round one provided \$116 million to 896 of the most disadvantaged Australian schools, with 95 per cent of those eligible applying.

The new round, available from today, will provide \$180 million to a further 1900 schools with the aim of achieving a rate of one computer for every two students.

However, the South Australian Association of State School Organisations says up to 50 schools have expressed "significant concerns" about the funding.

"There are concerns bordering on fear that it may expose them to a burden," association director David Knuckey told AAP.

"They are hesitant to apply because they don't know whether they'll end up paying to install, run and operate these computers and it won't be worth having them."

But Education Minister Julia Gillard says teachers, parents and students in South Australia have embraced the government's education revolution.

"Sixty-four South Australian schools were invited to apply in round one," Ms Gillard said in a statement.

"All 64 schools submitted an application for funding and all 64 South Australian schools that submitted an application were funded in round one.

"The Rudd government will continue to work with all state and territory governments and all state independent and catholic school systems to deliver the digital education revolution."

The revolution hit a stumbling block late last month when NSW threatened to pull out of the program if its funding concerns for implementing the scheme were not addressed.

They were and the commonwealth agreed to further discuss flow-on costs.

Opposition education spokesman Tony Smith says the news out of South Australia is another blow to the plan.

"Schools are blatantly rejecting having to pick up the costs for Kevin Rudd's costly election campaign promise," Mr Smith said in a statement.

"This just shows Kevin Rudd's digital education revolution was designed as an election campaign slogan only."

Round two closes on October 9.

AAP